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A GIFT OF A ROSE

Abstract

Two policemen (I remember there were at least two) stopped me and gave me a bunch of red, red roses. I nursed them with ice and water mixed with soluble aspirin. The roses had an instant bloom attracting stares and children who pointed; toddlers cried and ran.

Fred D'Aguiar

A GIFT OF A ROSE

Two policemen (I remember there were at least two)
stopped me and gave me a bunch of red, red roses.
I nursed them with ice and water mixed with soluble aspirin.
The roses had an instant bloom attracting stares
and children who pointed; toddlers cried and ran.

This is not the season for roses everyone said,
you must have done something to procure them.
I argued I was simply flashed down and the roses
liberally spread over my face and body to epithets
sworn by the police in praise of my black skin and mother.

Others told me to take care of the flowers, photo them,
a rare species, an example for others, a statistic;
that the policemen should be made a return gift
crossed several minds – a rose for a rose.
With neglect, they shrivelled and disappeared,

people stopped looking when I went Saturday shopping.
Though I was deflowered, a rose memory burned clear.
Now when I see the police ahead, I take the first exit;
I even fancy I have a bouquet of my own for them;
I pray they'll keep their unseasonable gifts to themselves.